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ABSTRACT

A program of an educational center providing training for graduate students in the areas of special education, educational psychology, elementary and secondary education, and guidance education is described. Practicum experiences in the diagnostic and remedial programming of learning disabled children are offered. The unique aspects of the program include: (1) a multidisciplinary, team approach to the diagnosis and remediation of learning disabilities; (2) graduate students working under complete professorial supervision; (3) teaching students to coordinate and follow up their efforts with the home, school, and community; (4) comprehensive diagnostic and remedial services provided to children at no cost; (5) extensive use of videotaping in training; and (6) field testing of diagnostic and remedial techniques. (JD)

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ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A CHILD SERVICE DEMONSTRATION CENTER FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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SUMMARY

The Child Service Demonstration Center for Children with Learning Disabilities at Mississippi State University was originally established under a two-year contract (OEC 300-74-9234, July 1, 1974-June 30, 1976) with the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. It is currently being maintained by the University and the Department of Educational Psychology/Special Education.

The purposes of the Center are focused on teaching, service, and research. The teaching component concentrates on providing graduate students in the areas of Special Education, Educational Psychology, Elementary and Secondary Education, Guidance Education, and Psychology the opportunity to receive intensive multidisciplinary practicum experiences in the diagnostic and remedial programming of learning disabled children. Simultaneously, two kinds of service are provided to children; a diagnostic/prescriptive program and a diagnostic/prescriptive/remedial program. The research potential of the Center involves the evaluation of diagnostic procedures, teaching methods, and materials.

The unique aspects of the program include: 1) The multidisciplinary, practicum team approach to the diagnosis and remediation of learning disabilities, 2) graduate students working under 100 percent professorial supervision, 3) graduate students being taught to coordinate and follow up their efforts with the home, school and community, 4) the comprehensiveness of the diagnostic and remedial services provided to the children at no cost, 5) the extensive use of videotaping in training, 6) the field testing of diagnostic and remedial techniques, and 7) the research potential.

Evaluation of the program includes: 1) Visits by external evaluators, 2) internal evaluation by the Center staff, 3) questionnaires to the graduates, schools, and parents, and 4) recommendations from the Advisory Council.

COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION

Description and Development of the Program

The period of July 1, 1974-January 15, 1975, was the organizational phase of the program. During this time the secretarial staff and graduate assistants were hired, staff responsibilities were delineated, the facility was remodeled to specification, the audio/videotape equipment was installed, diagnostic and remedial materials were ordered, curricular changes and new graduate course offerings were processed through the University's channels, publicity was disseminated, recruitment of graduate students and learning disabled children was initiated, and coordination with community support resources and personnel was begun.

Since the Center became operational on January 15, 1975, a total of 155 graduate students and 116 children aged 5-16 have been served. More specifically, 128 graduate students involved in the diagnostic/prescriptive component have, under total supervision, received intensive simulated and real training experiences in: 1) Interviewing techniques, 2) the administration, scoring, and interpretation of formal and informal diagnostic instruments used to assess physical, academic, social-emotional, and intellectual factors related to learning, 3) report writing, 4) the formulating of specific individualized diagnostic/prescriptive programs to the home and school, 5) the presentation of final reports to appropriate school, home, and medical personnel, and 6) conducting follow up evaluation of the children. To date, 42 children have received diagnostic/prescriptive services at the Center. Further, 64 graduate students involved in the diagnostic/prescriptive/remedial component have, under total supervision, received intensive instruction in: 1) Formulating short and long term teaching objectives, 2) formulating individualized instructional plans, 3) one-to-one and small group tutoring techniques, 4) the application of task analysis and task attending skills, 5) the previewing and use of commercial teaching materials, 6) the construction and use of teacher made materials, 7) report writing, and 8) the presentation of final reports to appropriate school, home and medical personnel. To date, 74 children have received diagnostic/prescriptive/remedial services at the Center.

Objectives and Goals

The goals of the Center's programs are:

1. To graduate highly trained professional personnel who are capable of implementing diagnostic/prescriptive/remedial techniques in educational settings.

2. To provide diagnostic/prescriptive/remedial services to learning disabled children.

3. To provide and conduct educational programs for parents, school personnel, and other concerned professionals.

4. To develop a Technical Manual to assist in project replication.

The Center was developed with a commitment to the philosophy that the most effective and efficient manner to effect educational change is to begin with changes in the curriculum of teacher training institutions. Only by providing pre-and in-service graduate students with intensive practicum experiences under 100 percent professorial supervision and teaching them to coordinate and follow up their efforts with the home, school, and community can new educational techniques and methods be widely and rapidly disseminated to improve the quality of education. The need for teachers and support personnel in the area of learning disabilities is reflected in the 1974-75 Manpower Needs Report for Special Education in Mississippi. A projected need for 1,624 learning disabilities teachers was noted to serve the 90 percent of the estimated number of children not currently being served. The Center is playing an important role in helping Mississippi overcome this problem area.

At the onset of the federal funding period, there was one learning disabilities class in the seven county region surrounding Mississippi State University. Currently there are 15 learning disabilities classes in the same geographical region. Similarly, the Center's influence may be seen in the 1975 establishment of a local Mississippi Association for Children with Learning Disabilities chapter. The Center co-sponsored the Eighth Annual M.A.C.L.D. conference in 1975 to add support and strength to the chapter.

Personnel Involved

The permanent staff at the Center consists of an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology/Special Education, an Associate Professor in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, a secretary, and a student clerk/typist. The professorial staff is responsible for: 1) the teaching, supervision, and evaluation of all practicum experiences, 2) public relations and speaking assignments, 3) program planning and evaluation, 4) budget management, 5) purchasing of materials and supplies, and 6) coordination of the Center's activities with state and local agencies and personnel.

Rotating staff includes four graduate teaching assistants, responsible for some of the videotaping and the cataloguing and care of the Center's teaching materials. Graduate students enrolled in the course, Supervision: Diagnosis of Children with Learning Disabilities Practicum, assist with supervisory and operational procedures of the Center. They verify the accuracy of the scoring and interpretation of the diagnostic administrations, act as resource personnel to the trainees, and assist in conducting the multidisciplinary staffing for each client.

The Advisory Council, consisting of 25 parents, teachers, public school administrators, physicians, and university personnel, help determine the program, process, and product of the Center's operation.

Community resource personnel and agencies associated with the Center include local physicians, a speech and hearing center, the local Mental Health Center, and the local Welfare Department. The Center enjoys a mutual referral/consultation relationship with these services, as warranted by individual cases.

Two Year Budget Summary (July 1, 1974-June 30, 1976)

Budget Class Categories	Total Federal Support
Personnel	55,535
Fringe Benefits	4,290
Travel	5,500
Equipment	21,773
Supplies	24,606
Consultation	4,000
Remodeling	11,328
Other	8,205
Total Direct Charges	135,237
Indirect Charges	10,819
TOTAL FEDERAL SUPPORT	146,056
*TOTAL UNIVERSITY SUPPORT	117,734
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	263,790

* Includes both inkind monies as well as hard monies

Contribution to the Improvement of Teacher Education

By the end of the federal funding period, the Center had met or exceeded all of the specific objectives stated in the original contract proposal.

Graduates of the program were surveyed after they had had time to implement their skills and training in the field and could, therefore, evaluate the quality, effectiveness, and appropriateness of their experiences at the Center. Seventy-five percent of the trainees rated their experiences as excellent; 25 percent rated them as good; none rated the lower options. Three trainees, hired as classroom/Resource Room teachers, were elevated to supervisory positions within their first year of teaching. The Center receives far more requests for teachers than it can provide.

Parents, schools, and Case Coordinators were surveyed about the appropriateness of the case study, applicability of the recommendations for the particular child, and the progress of the child. Sixty-eight percent of the responses indicated that the materials sent, the follow-up of the child, and the child's school progress was good, the highest option; 32 percent indicated that they were satisfactory; none rated them lower.

In addition to the practicum courses offered by the Center, other undergraduate and graduate classes utilize the facility and its materials as part of related coursework. To date, 1,623 students have utilized the Center in this capacity.

The Departments of Psychology and Student Personnel and Counselor Education utilize the videotape capabilities of the Center to strengthen the curricula of their programs by critiquing the interviewing and testing techniques of their students. The Elementary Education faculty utilize the Center and its videotape equipment to produce training/teaching tapes for demonstration purposes in undergraduate and graduate reading classes as does the faculty of Educational Psychology.

Parents and school officials have been invited to visit the Center to study ways in which school programs can be initiated and/or expanded. The Center staff has worked closely with three school systems that are in the process of establishing Resource Room programs. To date, 486 persons have visited the Center.

Evaluation Methods and Results

Internal Evaluation. The program, process, and product of the Center's operation is reviewed each semester by the Center staff, the Department Head of Educational Psychology/Special Education, the College of Education, and the Advisory Council. Any modifications are initiated during the following semester.

The trainee's performances are evaluated daily under professorial supervision; their written work is evaluated by the graduate supervisors and the professorial staff, and they are required to take midterm and final examinations which cover all aspects of the course content.

Each semester questionnaires are sent to graduated trainees who are employed in the field, and to the parents, schools, and Case Coordinators of the children evaluated and/or remediated by the Center. Response to the questionnaires has averaged 83 percent of those sent.

External Evaluation. During the first year of federal funding, the Center staff hired an external evaluator, well qualified and experienced with diagnostic/prescriptive/remedial techniques and knowledgeable with teacher education programs, to evaluate the Center's program. The evaluator's report was sent to the Project Officer.

At the end of the second year of funding, the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) sent a two-man team from the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences to extensively evaluate the Center's program. The team stayed one week and examined all forms, records, and case studies, interviewed the Center staff and the parents of children served, and met with university administrators. The Center staff is not privy to the final report that will be sent to BEH but feels that it will be very supportive.

Recommendations. It is recommended that any source wishing to establish a similar training/service facility, write to the Center requesting a copy of the Technical Manual. The Technical Manual, available free of charge, outlines in detail the goals, strategies, activities, procedures, and outcomes of this type program.